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# Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2487

Dec. 7, 1990

**FARM BILL SIGNED** -- "There's no question here or anyplace else how crucial a strong agricultural sector is to the future of this country," President **George Bush** said as he signed the 1990 farm bill Nov. 28. "Because farmers have always been important stewards of the Earth, this farm bill will help farmers protect water quality and wildlife habitat -- and its greater flexibility will boost crop rotation, in turn helping to control weeds and pests, and erosion," Bush said.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF FARM BILL** -- USDA has highlights from the 1990 farm act and the 1990 reconciliation action available now. For a copy of "Food, Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990," contact: **Marci Hilt** (202) 447-6445.

**COTTON PRODUCTION UP** -- Based on Nov. 1 conditions, the 1990 U.S. cotton crop is expected to be 14.9 million bales -- up 22 percent from last year. However, the low beginning stocks in 1990-91 are more than offsetting the increase in production, and total supply, estimated at 17.9 million bales, will be down 7 percent. The rise in production is due largely to a lower upland cotton acreage reduction requirement this season & a substantial rebound in expected yields in Texas. USDA economists estimate total area for harvest in 1990-91 at 11.4 million acres, up 20 percent. Contact: **Scott Sanford** (202) 219-0840.

**WHEAT & CORN EXPORTS DOWN** -- U.S. wheat & corn export commitments are down dramatically from last year, due in most part to a virtual abatement in export commitments to the USSR. The USSR drop is apparently a reflection of the very large Soviet grain harvest, along with political & financial uncertainty, & the lack of competitive U.S. credit terms. U.S. export commitments to the USSR are so low that it is becoming increasingly unlikely the USSR will meet minimum buying requirements for the October-December quarter under the U.S.-USSR long term trade agreement. Many other countries, like Japan, are also buying at a slower pace this year. Contact: **Steve Hammond** (202) 475-4196.

**RURAL TRENDS** -- After several years of marked improvement, rural employment showed almost no growth between the second quarters of 1989 & 1990, indicating a serious slowdown in the rural economy over the last year. Interpreting what this near standstill in employment means about the health of the rural economy is complicated by the fact that the rural unemployment rate remained relatively stable between the second quarters of 1989 & 1990. Much of the explanation has to be that while the demand for new workers declined, growth in the supply of workers was slow enough that the share of workers actively looking for jobs remained the same. Source: "Rural Conditions & Trends." Contact: **Sara Mills Mazie** (202) 219-0520.

**CHEWING ON A CORN LEAF** spells doom for a beet armyworm, because a bite makes the plant produce odors that attract armyworm enemies, USDA scientists have found. Ironically, the scents are probably made in the plant to be insect repellents aimed at future armyworm nibblers. But, **Ted C.J. Turlings, James H. Tumlinson III & W. Joe Lewis**, USDA scientists, found that these intended repellents attract the parasitic wasp that wants to lay her eggs in the armyworm. This is the first evidence that beneficial wasps use a plant's defensive scents to hunt caterpillars. **Contact: Ted C.J. Turlings or James H. Tumlinson (904) 374-5730.**

**CALIFORNIA QUARANTINE** -- USDA has quarantined fruit in a 75-square-mile area of Orange County, Calif., following the recent discovery of peach fruit flies. Under the quarantine, peaches & certain other fruits & vegetables may not be moved out of the state unless they are inspected & treated. The objective of the quarantine is to prevent the spread of peach fruit flies within California. **Contact: Amichai Heppner (301) 436-5222.**

**BEAGLES CHECK THE MAIL** -- If you saw our beagle at USDA Broadcasting's booth at NAFB, you'll be interested in knowing that USDA has now called in the dogs in a pilot program to detect contraband fruit inside parcels at the U.S. Post office in Honolulu. "**Doc Watson**," a specially trained member of USDA's **Beagle Brigade**, is specially trained to respond to the scents of mango, litchi, soursop, citrus, avocado & guava, the main carriers of exotic fruit flies. Hawaiian fruit going to the mainland U.S. is quarantined. "**Doc Watson**" has demonstrated virtual 100 percent accuracy. As of Oct. 31, he had sniffed out 477 illegal parcels of produce. **Contact: Caree Lawrence (301) 436-7280.**

**SHOPPING FOR FOOD THROUGH THE MAIL** -- Shoppers who are ordering mail-order foods for holiday gifts should keep food safety rules in mind, says **Sue Templin**, manager of USDA's Meat & Poultry Hotline. "Many consumers mistakenly think that because a meat or poultry product is vacuum packaged, canned or smoked, it doesn't need refrigeration," Templin says. "In fact, most of these products must be refrigerated. Check the label or ordering information to see if refrigeration is required." Shoppers with questions about food safety for mail-order gifts may call the USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline weekdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., EST at (800) 535-4555. Those who live in the Washington, D.C., area should call (202) 447-3333. **Contact: Sue Templin (202) 447-9351.**

**WHAT HAPPENS TO RAINFALL** in Arizona's Tombstone Territory? That's what USDA Hydrologist **William P. Kustas** is studying. The scientists measured rainfall, runoff, water movement, soil moisture, evaporation, water uptake by plants, evaporation from plant leaves & other factors vital to tracking the natural distribution, circulation & the overall fate of precipitation. What did they learn? "We're developing a huge databank," Kustas says, "and scientists from all over the world will be drawing from it for years to come. Some results may wind up in scientific journals within a year or so, but we'll be seeing significant studies based on what we did in Walnut Gulch well into the next century." **Contact: William P. Kustas (301) 344-2498.**

# FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

**AGRICULTURE USA #1749** -- The USDA's annual Outlook Conference is just finished...and John Snyder presents a capsule version of the 25 conference sessions which, taken together, give a preview of what consumers and farmers will face in the new year. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

**CONSUMER TIME #1229** --A homemade bug killer; the art and business of Christmas tree farming; the evergreen holiday tradition; cookbooks as gifts; 1991 food price predictions. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

**AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1737** -- USDA News Highlights; wheat, oats and barley deficiency payments announced; growing Christmas trees; breaking out in hives; more interest in cotton. (Weekly reel of news features.)

**NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1349** -- "Greenhouse effect" update; urban "heat island" effect; lucky find protects lettuce; insects wage biological warfare; wasp "rangers" patrol cabbage. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

**UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE** -- Wed., Dec. 12, Ag. income and finance outlook, world oilseed situation, world ag. and grain situation; Thurs., Dec. 13, sugar and sweetener outlook; Fri., Dec. 14, U.S. milk production; Mon., Dec. 17, U.S. tobacco outlook; Tues., Dec. 18, crop/weather update, in search of mistletoe; Wed., Dec. 19, U.S. ag. outlook, catfish production, cattle on feed, in search of Christmas trees; Thurs., Dec. 20, U.S. trade update, in search of decking the halls.

**DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINES (202) 488-8358 or 8359.**  
Material changed at 5 p.m., EST, each working day.

## FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE (Week of Dec. 6, 8 and 10)

**FEATURES** -- Pat O'Leary reports on flexible farms; Lynn Wyvill takes a look at mail order food safety; Dave Luciani, Michigan State University, on cutting your own Christmas tree; Joe Courson, University of Georgia, reports on new Christmas tree varieties.

**ACTUALITIES** -- USDA Chief meteorologist Dr. Norton Strommen on weather and crops; USDA economist Greg Gajewski on agriculture outlook; USDA economist Kate Buckley on fruit outlook; USDA analyst Mike Dwyer on export trends; USDA economist Steve MacDonald on exports; USDA economist Phil Scronce on feed grains.

**NEXT WEEK** -- Pat O'Leary reports 1991 food price forecast; Lynn Wyvill reports on global climate change; and DeBoria Janifer reports on Christmas tree selection.

Available on Satellite Westar IV, Transponder 12D (Channel 23), audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY . . . . .7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EST  
SATURDAY . . . . .10:00 - 10:45 a.m., EST  
MONDAY . . . . .8:00 - 8:45 a.m., EST



**OFFMIKE**

**SHOVELING SNOW...**from the station's front porch was the project **Monty Beal** (KWPC, Muscatine, Iowa) was handling when we called. First big snow storm of the year dropped 10 inches and more was forecast, closing schools. Producers don't expect any major problems for cattle. Temperatures just a few days before had been in the 60s.

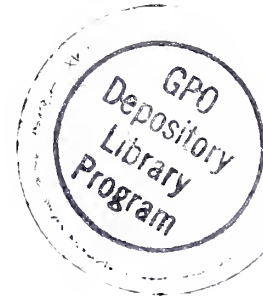
**LOTS OF TIME...**for placing one's feet to the fire, says **Richard Balvanz** (WMT, Cedar Rapids, Iowa). Twelve inches of snow was forecast for his area. Schools were closed and transportation reduced to a trickle. Wheat producers welcome cooler temperatures because emerging plants were growing too fast.

**THE KEY...**to stability of wheat prices is export credit to the Soviets, producers are telling **Kelly Lenz** (WIBW, Topeka, Kan.). They say the Export Enhancement Program can provide a necessary boost for the wheat market and wheat millers. Kelly says in his area a ton of wheat or corn is cheaper than alfalfa.

### ***Farm Broadcasters Letter***

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**WINTER WHEAT...**conditions are rated good to excellent, says **Gary Schoepf** (WJAG/KEXL, Norfolk, Neb.). Moisture has improved pasture, and harvested fields are being used for cattle grazing. Gary says equipment suppliers are optimistic about year-end purchases.

**UNUSUALLY WARM...**temperatures made the final days of harvest pleasant, says **Bob Brown** (WLBK/WDZK, De Kalb, Ill.). Producers got their corn and beans in before the rains arrived. His area has received 6 inches above normal rainfall amounts.

**CONGRATULATIONS...**to KMMJ, Grand Island, Neb. Farm Director **Dennis Morrice** reports the station is celebrating its 65th anniversary, signing on the air in November 1925, and continuing its commitment to farm broadcasting.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vic Powell".

**VIC POWELL**  
Chief, Radio & TV Division